

# A HISTORICAL OUTLINE



THE HISTORY OF ANDORRA, ALWAYS PRESENT IN THE COLLECTIVE CONSCIENCE OF HER POPULATION, IS CONDITIONED, AMONGST OTHER THINGS, BY THE GEOPOLITICAL SITUATION ARISING FROM HER SIZE, THE EXISTENCE OF NEIGHBOURING COUNTRIES THAT SURROUND HER AND ALSO BY HER REDUCED POPULATION.

PERE CAVERO LECTURER IN HISTORY



**T**he archaeological evidence points to a population at the end of the Mesolithic age –some eight thousand years ago. Throughout prehistory, there have been various nuclei at the La Margineda cave, Andorra, el Cedre and l'Oral.

Polybius, in the second century B.C., tells how Pyrenean peoples fought against the Carthaginians who were heading for Italy. Amongst these peoples were the Arenosi and the Andosini.

As we can see in the towns of Puig d'Enclar and l'Antuix, amongst others,

Romanization also took place in this area. However, our historical knowledge contains a large gap until the ninth century A.D., when we find two documents that could form the basis of the beginnings of Andorra. One is the "Carta Pobla", from the early ninth century, which refers to the foundation of Andorra by Charlemagne. The other is the Deed of Consecration of the Cathedral of Urgell, in the second half of the century, where mention is made of the towns of the bishopric of Urgell, which contributed to the reconstruction of the cathedral, destroyed in a raid by the

Saracens. It is in this document that the parishes of Andorra appear for the first time: Canillo, Encamp, Ordino, La Massana, Andorra, Santa Coloma and Sant Julià de Lòria.

The territory of Andorra formed part of the Spanish March –to be precise, of the County of Urgell. During his campaign against the Saracen, though, the Count of Urgell gradually moved towards Balaguer, close to Lleida. This is why the Bishop of Urgell gained more power, until in 1133 he became Lord of Andorra, after various donations, exchanges and purchases agreed with the Count of





MINIATURE DEPICTING A PACT BETWEEN COUNTS OF URGELL AND Cerdanya

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BELLTOWER OF SANT JOAN DE CASELLES

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Urgell. Thus the Bishop acquired power over Andorra which has lasted to this day. During the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, the Bishop had to defend his rights and prevent his neighbours' annexionist intentions from weakening his possessions. Eventually he had to agree to a treaty with the Lord of Cabó, in 1159, which meant the feudalization of the rights over Andorra.

The lordship of Cabó and protector of the bishop extended its alliances and possessions through successive marriages; it was joined to the lordship of Castellbó at the end of the twelfth century and with that of Foix in 1208. The Lord of Foix, though, who was theoretically the bishop's protector as successor to Cabó, was in fact the bishop's natural enemy. This new situation led to a confrontation which was to culminate in the warlike incursions of the Count of Foix, Roger Bernat III, and the replies of Bishop Peter of Urg. The situation became impossible and pressure on the part especially of King Peter of Aragon and the Archbishop of Tarra-

gona forced the two enemies to sign the first *Pariatge*, in 1278, which was followed by a second in 1288.

These two *Pariatges* gave rise to an Andorra separated from other regions of the Pyrenees –where other *Pariatges* were signed– and led to the regulation and clarification of power in Andorra. These documents regulate recognition of the nobility through the *qüèstia*, which is still in force today, and regulate justice and civil and criminal jurisdiction, as well as obliging the people of Andorra to organise an armed force to defend the Lords. The Lord of Foix abandoned his policy of expansion south of the Pyrenees and directed his ambitions towards the north. As a result of this change, he became lord of Bearn, king of Navarre and, in 1572, king of France. All of this made for a more active presence of the Bishop of Urgell in Andorra. It is hardly surprising, then, that he himself should have been the first to grant the Andorrans the right to create the *Consell de la Terra* (Council of the Land), in 1419, an organism based on the administration

of land between the people of Andorra and its defence from her neighbours. Until the end of the eighteenth century, Andorra enjoyed a period of political stability: the ratification of privileges by the nobility, development of an agricultural economy and exploitation of textile and iron industries.

The French Revolution, however, put the historical constitution and the independence of Andorra in danger. The French revolutionaries broke off all relations with Andorra, which meant the abolition of customs exemptions and full economic independence. This supposed freedom was harmful because, as Andorra depended on a single lord –the Bishop of Urgell–, she was in danger of being liquidated and becoming part of Spain. Relations with France were therefore resumed, culminating in 1806 with the restoration of traditional links by a decree by Napoleon.

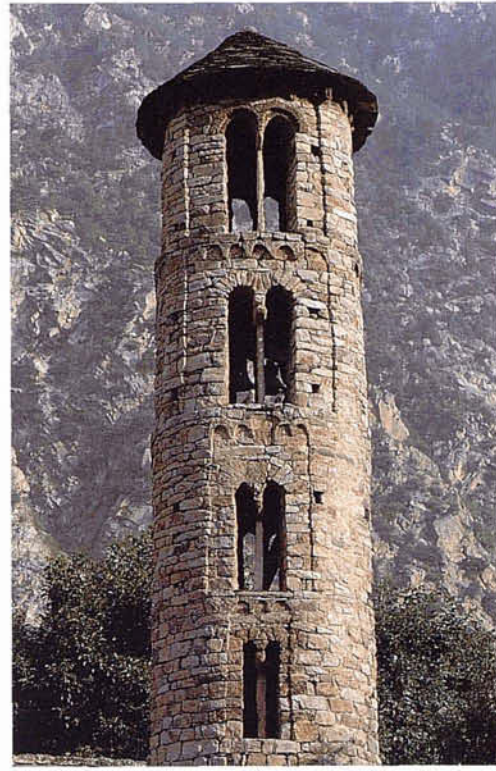
The nineteenth century appears as the pursuit of economic improvements as a result of the wish for greater contact with the exterior.





SANT ESTEVE (ANDORRA LA VELLA)

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BELLTOWER OF SANTA COLOMA

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The *Consell General*, heir and successor to the *Consell de la Terra*, began a policy of concessions to achieve the infrastructures necessary for development. This new situation was to confront two political conceptions: the traditional and the progressive. This bitter, radical conflict gave rise to the New Reform of 1866. This reform extended the electorate to include all heads of household and physically separated the local administrations: the *Comú* and the *Consell General*. However, instead of resolving the situation, the reform made things considerably worse.

The presence of foreign concessionaires, the political unrest, the wish for improvements and the frequent disturbances forced the Co-Princes –the new name for the Lords of Andorra: bishop and head of the French state, successor to the king of France– to reorganise their administrations. The nomination of the *Delegats Permanents*, amongst other measures, made the power of the Co-Princes more noticeable in Andorra and put an end to confrontations.

The end of the nineteenth century and beginning of the twentieth was a period of economic and demographic decline for Andorra. Many Andorrans were forced to emigrate. This was the time of the closure of the forges and of crises in the textile industry and farming.

The recovery came in the thirties. The *Consell General* granted two concessions: the FHASA (Hydroelectrical Forces of Andorra), which meant the construction of a principal road network, and the concession of *Ràdio Andorra*, which was to publicize Andorra abroad.

However, the need for an abundant workforce, which the Andorrans could not supply, led to the start of immigration, mainly from Spain.

In 1933, Andorra achieved universal male suffrage –reflecting neighbouring political trends–, which was to be in force until 1941 and restored in 1947. The economic process was interrupted with the start of the civil war in 1936 and the subsequent world war.

At the end of the sixties, there was a

revival in the economy based especially on commerce. This led to a new wave of immigration and, for the first time, the foreign population far exceeded in number the local inhabitants.

Since the seventies, economic growth has given rise to new political and social anxieties that have modified the social structure of the country. Universal suffrage was achieved in 1973 and a reform was started that included the creation of the parish of Escaldes-Engordany in 1978 and the creation of a government in 1981.

Towards the end of the eighties, the country's energy reserves were nationalised by purchase (1988) and negotiations started with the EEC which ended in 1991. This meant the explicit international recognition of Andorra. In 1990, two opposed political conceptions arose, which nevertheless agreed on the initiation of a constituent process that will define Andorra and identify her to her neighbours, now that no one has any doubts about the historical constitution. ■